

Procedure for Electronically Assisted Voting for State Elections

Version 4.0

Approval



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Electoral Commissioner

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Version history

Version	Notes	Author	Date of Change
1.0		Electoral Commissioner	September 2015
2.0		Electoral Commissioner	December 2019
3.0		Electoral Commissioner	September 2020
4.0	Reviewed and updated	Executive Director, Election Event Management	December 2023

Review

These procedures will be reviewed **in the year before every State general election**, or if the relevant regulatory frameworks change in a way that means these procedures are no longer contemporary for the ECQ.

Purpose

To provide the Electoral Commission of Queensland (ECQ) staff and returning officers with guidance to administer electronically assisted voting (EAV) under the *Electoral Act 1992* for the benefit of voter accessibility in Queensland.

Scope

The *Electoral Act 1992* provides the statutory criteria for eligibility for an elector to cast an electronically assisted vote in a State election if the elector:

- (a) cannot vote without assistance because the elector has an impairment or an insufficient level of literacy; or
- (b) cannot vote at a polling booth because of an impairment; or
- (c) is a member of a class of electors prescribed under the *Electoral Act 1992* or the relevant and applicable subordinate legislation.

Application

This procedure applies to all ECQ staff performing functions linked to how an elector may cast an electronically assisted vote for an election of a member of the Legislative Assembly.

This procedure has been considered to ensure compatibility with the 23 protected rights under the *Human Rights Act 2019* and is deemed compatible.

Procedure

1. EAV for State elections

EAV procedures for State elections provide for the following:

1.1. Registration of electors who are eligible for EAV: to register for an EAV, electors must meet the eligibility criteria in the *Electoral Act 1992* and subordinate legislation.

- Registration will be available from the commencement of the early voting period.
- Registration will close at 12.00 noon on election day.
- Registration enables the ECQ telephone operator to use the ECQ Election Management System (EMS). The EMS is linked to the Queensland electoral roll.
- To register, an elector must first contact the EAV voting service by using the EAV telephone number and provide their name, date of birth and address which they are enrolled.
- The ECQ telephone operator must verify the elector's details against the electoral roll.
 - If an elector is not listed on the electoral roll, they cannot be registered for EAV.

- If unable to vote using EAV, the elector may be offered alternative voting options.
- To register successfully for EAV an elector must meet the eligibility criteria.
- An elector who wishes to register for EAV must make a declaration that they are eligible to be registered for EAV based on the eligibility criteria.
- An elector who does not meet the eligibility criteria for EAV or who does not make the declaration must not be registered by the ECQ telephone operator for EAV.
- The Personal Identification Number (PIN) is selected by the elector.
- The registration number is generated by the EMS and is unique to each elector.
- An elector will receive their PIN and registration number when processed through the EMS.

1.2. Help to enable Electronically Assisted Voters cast an EAV:

- i. Subject to paragraph (ii), if an elector satisfies an issuing officer that the elector is unable to vote without help, the elector may be assisted by another person chosen by the elector, in casting an EAV.
- ii. The other person may help the elector in any of the following ways—
 - (a) acting as an interpreter;
 - (b) explaining the ballot paper and the prescribed procedures for EAV;
 - (c) assisting the elector comply with the prescribed procedures in order to cast their vote.

1.3. Authentication of each EAV: a voter must call the ECQ to access and to use EAV.

- Vote taking by EAV will commence from the start of the early voting period through until the close of polls at 6.00pm on election day for the election.
- Vote taking by EAV will be conducted using the EMS.
- An elector telephoning the EAV voting service will be asked by the telephone operator to not disclose their name during the telephone call.
- An elector must provide the PIN and registration number to the telephone operator.

- The elector will be verified by the telephone operator when the elector provides the correct combination of the issued PIN and registration number. By using the EMS, the telephone operator is unable to know the personal details of the elector.
- The telephone operator must explain the voting process to the elector:
 - the elector is informed that there is a second telephone operator listening to the conversation to ensure that all voting preferences are accurately recorded;
 - the telephone operator must also inform the elector if there are any scrutineers present observing the authentication and voting process.
- The telephone operator must obtain from the elector their PIN and registration number and verify that the elector has been registered to use the EAV service.
- The telephone operator must validate the PIN and registration and identify the elector's State electoral district.
- When the EMS verifies the elector's eligibility to vote, the telephone operator completes vote taking on the EMS.
- Ballot papers are completed by use of the EMS unless the ballot paper is oversized. Oversized ballot papers are to be allocated to each issuing point and kept in the custody of the issuing officer.
- Prior to taking a vote, the telephone operator must first read out verbatim all the names of the candidates and any political party affiliations in the order that they appear on the ballot paper and provide voting instructions.
- The elector votes by notifying the telephone operator of their vote preferences and the order of voting preferences against the name of all the candidates.
- The second telephone operator must listen to the telephone call and observe the first operator marking the ballot paper to ensure the elector's vote is accurately recorded.
- If the second telephone operator detects an inconsistency between the elector's instruction and the markings that have been made on the ballot paper, then the inconsistency must be corrected.
- After the ballot paper is marked the first telephone operator must read back to the elector their vote and the preferences that have been recorded on the ballot paper.
- On completion of the ballot paper the telephone operator must:
 - print the ballot paper;
 - place the printed ballot paper in the ballot box; and
 - advise the elector the ballot paper has been placed in the ballot box.
- On completion of this process the EMS will mark the elector on the electoral roll as having voted without identifying them to the vote taking operator.

1.4. Recording each elector who uses EAV: as voting is compulsory for all Queenslanders over the age of 18 the Queensland electoral roll must record when an elector has voted.

- The EMS that is used by the telephone operator to enable an elector to use EAV is linked to an electronic record of the Queensland electoral roll.
- The reference number issued to an elector for EAV is generated by the EMS and is recorded against elector's specific enrolment details.

1.5. Ensure the secrecy of each EAV: preservation of the secrecy of voting is a fundamental requirement to conduct free and democratic elections in accordance with the law.

- The registration and vote taking functions of EAV must be performed by different telephone operators housed in separate locations.
- To preserve an elector's anonymity the telephone operator who registers the elector for EAV must not be the same telephone operator who takes the elector's vote.
- At no time during the election period must any of the ECQ telephone operators change between working in the registration and the vote taking work areas.
- Electors who telephone to register for EAV with the registration work area must have to end the call and telephone again to be put through to the vote taking work area.
- To maintain secrecy of each EAV, call centre staff will not be able to transfer telephone calls between the EAV registration area and the vote taking work area.
- Vote taking staff must advise electors at the start of the call not to reveal their identity at any time during the call.

1.6. Secure transmission and storage of electronically assisted vote, until printing: security arrangements for EAV processes ensure that voting information cannot be intercepted.

- The system of EAV at the ECQ is an in-house computer system with appropriate controls to manage authorised staff-only system access, security and data integrity.
- Vote taking, storage and printing occurs in a secure in-house controlled environment which does not require electronically assisted votes to be transmitted to the ECQ.
- Ballot papers used to record electronically assisted votes are to be securely stored in sealed ballot boxes in the ECQ's offices until counting commences.
- One ballot box is to be used for early voting and a second for voting on election day.

1.7. Printing, for scrutiny and counting, of a ballot paper for each electronically assisted vote: each elector's vote must be counted accurately to the candidate of their choice.

- Scrutineers are permitted to access the counting room to observe the counting process.
 - Scrutineers must carry adequate identification to demonstrate that the person is a scrutineer when in the controlled environment of the counting room.

- Scrutineers are entitled to observe the printing of completed ballot papers and the counting of EAV ballot papers.
 - Scrutineers must obey the lawful directions given by authorised ECQ staff.
 - After 6.00pm on election day the EAV ballot boxes must be opened and the ballot papers are to be removed.
 - All ballot papers must be sorted into State electoral districts.
 - Ballot papers are then to be counted for each State electoral district and exchanged with the relevant returning officer.
 - Only if directed by the Electoral Commissioner, EAV votes will be further scrutinised and counted in accordance with sections 126 and 127 of the *Electoral Act 1992* (i.e., first preference count) conducted.
 - The results of the over-all exchange and (to the extent conducted) the first preference count must be entered into the EMS.
 - Following counting, the ballot papers and all documentation used in the counting process must be placed into parcels and then securely taped with tamper evident tape.
- 1.8. Secure delivery of printed ballot papers to the returning officer: the returning officer for an election is responsible for the proper conduct of the election.
- Once secured, parcels must be dispatched and transported to the correct returning officer's office, consistent with the ECQ's *Ballot Paper Handling Policy*.
 - Upon receipt of the parcels containing the EAV ballot material, the returning officer is to:
 - inspect the parcels and their contents for signs of damage or tampering, and immediately inform the ECQ if the same is detected;
 - if necessary, conduct a preliminary count of ballot papers received and record the results of the count in the ECQ election results computer system;
 - perform the official count of the ballot papers to ensure that the initial count was accurate and recorded correctly; and
 - record the result of the official count, even if unchanged, into the EMS.

Appendix 1 — Definitions

Definitions

Term	Definition
Elector	Elector means a person entitled to vote under the <i>Electoral Act 1992</i> .
Electronically assisted voting (EAV)	Electronic assisted voting is electronic assistance to help an elector to cast a vote in an election as prescribed in the <i>Electoral Act 1992</i> .
Impairment	<p>Impairment in relation to a person means –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) the total or partial loss of the person’s bodily functions, including the loss of a part of the person’s body; or (b) the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person’s body; or (c) a conduct or malfunction that results in the person learning more slowly than a person without the conduct or malfunction; or (d) a condition, illness or disease that impairs a person’s thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour; or (e) the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing illness or disease; or (f) reliance on a guide, hearing or assistance dog, wheelchair or other remedial device; <p>whether or not arising from an illness, disease or injury or from a condition subsisting at birth, and includes an impairment that –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (g) presently exists; or (h) previously existed but no longer exists.
Oversized Ballot papers	Oversized ballot papers are those that are longer than standard due to having more than 12 candidates shown on them.
Scrutineer	Scrutineer is an adult appointed by a candidate to observe the polling and counting procedures on the candidate’s behalf during an election.
Voter accessibility	Voter accessibility refers to ensuring access to the vote for eligible Queenslanders is fundamental to protecting the enfranchisement of citizens. It is vital that access to a range of convenient voting options is guaranteed for as many citizens as possible, especially marginalised and remote voters.

Appendix 2 — Regulatory Framework

Regulatory framework

- *Anti-Discrimination Act 1991*
- *Electoral Act 1992 and subordinate legislation*
- *Human Rights Act 2019*